ORGAN INSTITUTE

QUARTERLY

AUTUMN, 1952

Articles

by

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ERNEST WHITE

T. CARL WHITMER

A Letter

from

HENRY WILLIS

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ORGAN INSTITUTE QUARTERLY

Volume 2, Number 4 Autumn 1952

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Beautiful Sounds and Organ Music

By Richard A. Hudson

The organist tenderly drew the most beautiful stop on the Swell, caressed the keys with a tonic chord, and, with a misty gleam in his eye, breathed, "Isn't that a beautiful sound?" Deeply moved by the profound, sensuous experience, I concurred, "Yes, that *is* a beautiful sound." Disturbed by my aesthetic conscience, I added, "But is that sound capable of making music?"

This bombshell might have led, in the currently popular style of discussion, to an exchange of descriptive terms: "romantic," "baroque," "sentimental," "unemotional," "intellectual." Such debate is, however, definitely limited in its capacity to broaden the aesthetic outlook of either party or to further the general cause of art. I wish to presume that on this extraordinary occasion the organists involved were endowed with a personal and artistic integrity which allowed a more scholarly and sincere interchange of ideas.

In any musical discussion, the lines of thought are likely to converge upon the deep life-roots of art itself, the basic concepts of its existence and function in relation to the general life process. Even though the discussion springs from a beautiful sound in a Swell box, its inevitable trend will be toward such elemental questions as, What is music? And indeed, even, What is life? It is not currently fashionable for the musician to be concerned with problems of philosophy, aesthetics, mysticism, metaphysics, or religion. Attempts on the part of the organist to leave his prescribed area of the keyboard are likely to be met with smiles or jeers. But only when the most minute detail of his art is confirmed by deep aesthetic insight will the organist achieve that noble artistic integrity which will place him in a valid relation to the life-process.

So I boldly inquire, What is the purpose of life? The answer that best satisfies me is, Through personal creativity to unite oneself with the greater, universal process of creativity. Through personal creativity, motion and continuity are established which lead in the direction of a complete and perfectly ordered union with the mysterious force of creativity that characterizes our universe. Such complete union is the ever sought but never attained goal, and is the principal motivation of life.

Art, on the other hand, offers man the *total* life-process condensed into a miniature unit. By the powers of his own creative imagination, he may unite himself with the artistic creative process, which leads him (and which *he*, in a sense, leads) from the dissonance of incompleted form through a driving continuity of purpose to a final, perfect, and satisfying consonance of completed form. Thus, art presents to man the opportunity of experienc-

ing something of the mysterious life process of creativity in a unit small enough for his comprehension, yet great enough to challenge the noblest in his imagination.

The life and art processes both involve a mixture of sensuous and intellectual elements, in such proportion that in the creative process they become united in a new state which is different from and superior to their original condition and can only be described as the "aesthetic" or "mystical" state. Analogously, water is composed of two ingredients, oxygen and hydrogen, both gases. Through a chemical mutation possible only by the proper balance of the two elements, they become a new substance which, being a liquid, is very different in nature from either of its constituents. To offer a thirsty man either oxygen or hydrogen would be useless, no matter how useful on other occasions oxygen or hydrogen might be. Similarly, the creative aspirations will not be satisfied by art works that are altogether or predominantly either intellectual or sensuous. Music must be the mystical mutation of these two elements into something of an entirely different nature. One of the most serious concerns of life is the adjustment of the balance of sensuous and intellectual forces. So it follows that in art also this problem is of prime concern. Both life and art allow broad but fixed limits beyond which either the sensuous or intellectual element cannot further be expanded without destroying the efficacy of the resulting union.

Since music is neither the sensuous nor the intellectual, although it is created from both, then why should we be so much concerned with anything less than the completed product? Attention has been focused on these two lesser experiences by the fact that human nature is involved in the evolution towards musical appreciation. To the person first encountering a work of true musical art, the sensuous element eclipses all other impressions, since it is always the most immediately appealing and because it requires little or no creative imagination to be accepted. This explains the appeal of the popular song. It requires no creative effort by the listener; it merely reaches forth and embraces him. This is not to condemn the "popular" way of using sound; it is merely defining it in its proper function as different from musical art. Continued contact with an art work, however, finds a person becoming accustomed to the appeal of its sounds and dissatisfied with them alone. He begins to notice intellectual elements of form and the treatment of tonal ideas. If the creative abilities of this person permit, he eventually recognizes and experiences the infinitely greater state of selfless, timeless creativity which this work of art can offer to those with ears to hear. Thus it is that the artistic experience depends not only upon the presence of a work of art, but equally upon the presence of a person who can fuse with it his own creative imagination.

Abstract sound is one of the most obvious ways in which the sensuous can enter into the musical process. Used as a means for the expression of great ideas within a logically ordered form, beautiful sound assumes its legitimate role in the art form. But, as soon as a sound is used only for its abstract beauty, the process of music *ends* and a different process on a dif-

ferent level begins. We as musicians are by nature more than ordinarily sensitive to the impressions of sounds and are more familiar than anyone else with the sense-experience, which can, indeed, be moving and powerful and inspirational, but which *is not* the infinitely more wonderful process of *music.*

Many times in listening to music my attention has suddenly been arrested by an overwhelmingly beautiful sound. Many people would be pleased to be so moved by sheer sound, but for me it interrupted the continuity of the musical process. Has the sound of an orchestra never thrilled you so exceedingly that you have lost all contact with the evolution of the composer's formal ideas? Has the power of a mighty organ never stirred your emotions so forcefully that all musical content has been forgotten? Such are, indeed, thrilling moments, perhaps; but they are as unmusical, in the artistic sense, as the mysterious twilight of a cathedral. The sense-experience cannot be condemned as such; the important fact is that it does *not* constitute music.

We must then consider what kinds of sounds are usable for musical expression. It might be suggested that the most adequate sounds for artistic manipulation are those which are not too assertive; i.e. neither by themselves so beautiful that our attention is altogether captured by them alone, nor so ugly that we are repelled by them. In either case attention is inescapably focused on sound so that we are less able to perceive musical processes.

Perhaps an ideal example is the tone of the harpsichord. Probably no one ever struck a tonic chord on this instrument and asked, "Isn't that a beautiful sound?" Whether or not it is a beautiful sound is not as important as the question, Can it effectively render music? Some may like the sound and some may not; but it is a superbly effective medium for the projection of musical art. It is instructive to observe how many present-day music lovers can enjoy something like the *Goldberg Variations* on their intended instrument.

Now consider the many colors in a painter's palette as analogous to the many ranks of pipes in an organ. If a painter should mix all the colors which he considered most beautiful and then arranged these in a row on his palette, even a layman would think him foolish. Rather does the painter begin with a palette lined with the simple, elemental colors; and only as the painting process demands does he mix the simple colors to form new colors. And because a painting uses the most beautiful colors, it is not for that reason the best painting. Just as color is the servant of the painting process, so should sound be the servant of the musical. The tonal design of an organ should provide the organist with a palette of sound colors, each sound being one of the simple and pure sounds which are natural to pipes. Then, for a particular composition, the kinds of sounds can be obtained which are demanded by the texture and form of the music.

Try this experiment. Pull all the luscious string stops and start to play a Bach fugue. Before many entrances of the subject you will become

sick from the confusion; your musical instinct will be searching vainly for contact with the musical content but will be frustrated by the predominant prettiness of the sound. These stops of so much beauty become effective only when the intellectual content is of such low intensity that their appeal to the senses is allowed to be projected undisturbed by the intrusion of complex ideas. Thus, contrapuntal music, in which multiple melodic ideas result in a texture of high intensity, is misrepresented by projection in such a medium. Romantic music, being of a homophonic nature and consequently of comparatively low musical intensity, allows for considerably more of the "beautiful sound."

I am purposely *not* implying here any discrimination in favor of a particular style of music, or in favor of particular kinds of stops or tonal design, nor am I discussing what instruments are suited for a particular style. These considerations would require further extensive discussion. My main object is to establish a basis, deeply rooted in valid and elemental aesthetic principles, for the sincere and instructive consideration of the problems of the organist's art. I have written little about beautiful sounds and less about organ music, but have dwelt upon the deeper artistic principles by which to judge them both.

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WRITE DEPT. O. I.

Invitation To Improvisation

By T. Carl Whitmer

Very recently a fine organist wrote that he had no use for improvisation on organ programs. He said it was all "show-off stuff" and usually not a good Sonata or Fugue.

I wonder whether any reader can imagine Bach, Franck, or Beethoven "showing off." To such men improvisation simply was breathing forth music naturally, since all were improvisers from their early youth, with high creative gifts, ebullient spirits, and severely regimented education. So there came forth from them musical ideas possessing remarkable perfection of logical development and sound structure. Many published works appearing on programs are not so expressive and structurally perfect. One wonders whether perfectionists and those who do not believe in the art *can* improvise in large forms. It is indeed a massive art requiring a long apprenticeship and deep faith.

The American organist who does believe in improvisation is at a disadvantage because his early teachers did not start him in it, believing that the lesson period was too short to do the necessary technical work and extempore training at the same time. But note that French organists take the time, and my readers know well that the great French improvisers have quite as much technique as our American organists. We admire those who can improvise in large forms, but we still do not take the trouble to remedy a basic defect in the education of organists. Even for the less talented, improvisation is an important creative element, stimulating imagination and giving a depth of insight into composition processes, which is an essential factor in personal interpretation.

I

Before going into some aspects of the technique of improvisation, we must keep in mind that there is always a difference between this art, which is musical composition "off-the-cuff," as it were, and musical theory as one learns it in textbooks.

Musical improvisation is an evolving or developing process, while theory is like grammar and is more or less static; or it is apt to be static if not taught by creative minds. Theory should, ideally, be a generator of ideas as well as a system of deductions from the methods and practices of the great composers. The "academic" teacher does not understand, for example, how formulas can have urge. They seem to forget that Mozart, among others, thrived upon and was dependent upon formulas, artificial and usual. To the creative mind such formulas, properly used, become the very founts of inspiration.

One difficulty that we have in educating ourselves in any field is our usual unwillingness to go on mental as well as emotional adventures. So many think of The Arts in terms of emotional sprees; and if their ideas do

not grow and wax fat in a hurry, they are unhappy and give up trying. All the arts are based on formulas which require thought, calculation, and assimilation before they can have emotional driving power.

II

Improvisation has been with us from the dawn of music. Up to about 1500 it was an art chiefly associated with chants, folk songs, and folk dances. After that time organists gradually became interested in integrated forms based on folk tunes and, later, on chorales. Around the latter, both in composition and extempore work, they added calculated mathematical "risks," sometimes caressing the theme and sometimes bumping it from all sides, and at other times poking fun at it, as it were. As an aside, organists would play Bach more interestingly if they recognized the fun in some of his counterpoint!

Organists have always used their improvising talent, but the great musical flowering in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries brought some pianists into the field. Bach (on the piano also), the fine French harpsichordists, Mozart, Hummel, Beethoven and Liszt were among them. Then piano extemporization stopped until the modern jazz era which quickly appropriated it as a tradition — a different type, to be sure, but still improvisation.

Indifferent improvisers might be divided into two classes: those who think they can never achieve anything and those who think it can be done offhand. The result is the same — nothing. Both types are difficult to deal with, particularly those of the second class, because their creative processes are emotionally unbalanced. So, when their emotions are loosed without the controlling and shaping effect of basic formulas and without benefit of the full and rich grammar of music so well learned that it is used instinctively, it is a case of trying to get musical cream without the chore of "milking."

One deterrent to getting anywhere is that we often think what we compose or improvise will not be original. We really ought to take heart from the realization that nobody is altogether original all the time.

Improvisation is not necessarily for solo performance only, or even for the first essential, service playing, but primarily for development of creative power, which in its turn gives new ideas about interpretation of our set pieces, as noted earlier. That is a much misunderstood function of the practice of improvisation.

III

Cassirer says that all art expresses emotion in a disciplined way. It is convenient, then, to outline three aspects of our art under consideration: 1) the mechanical; 2) the theoretical (mental); 3) the emotional.

This essay is especially for church service playing (although the bases are similar for solo work), which is the most important phase for every organist. So for the starting point we suggest choosing a rhythmically interesting motif of five or seven notes from a hymn or anthem for "next Sunday," and developing it *melodically*. Forget Harmony, and keep Counterpoint in reserve for a few days.

As a daily study make this motif germinate into an extended melody. Try to construct it with recognizable phrases, sentences and periods. Give the motif a lot of different mechanical treatments, sequence, inversion, et cetera. These are exercises for the mind similar to exercises for feet or hands.

Play sequences in single notes, first with one hand and then the other, and down to the pedals, up and down in the same intervals and key, then change intervals and key, enlarge the motif, vary positions on the keyboards and devise new rhythms.

The second day, review the above and add a simple second part in various ways, in addition to the above treatments. Play with right hand and pedal, left hand and pedal, the latter especially. Make the added part interesting because of its melodic progression.

Next day, try three parts but think of voice movements and not chord progressions.

The following day, review the above, then try a simple, short, two-part canon. Finally, play in four parts contrapuntally.

Keep in mind that Counterpoint is the chief factor fortifying all development, the main factor in forward movement in all musical works, which by its constant discipline gives solidity to form.

By this time the player will be heartily sick of these notes selected for growth. But let him keep doggedly at it until he feels that he has exhausted his theme as well as himself! Invert and invent a little more, and then launch a continuous improvisation over the same notes. Do not then think of musical grammar or use homophonic treatment. Set a one-minute limit, then a three-minute limit. Whenever you get "stuck," play the motif at once in pedals or left hand and add parts one after another. Do not stop. If it sounds odd at first, ignore it. Keep moving always.

After some proficiency, take new notes based on the music for the following Sunday, developing them from Monday to Friday. Improvise on Saturday for one minute, then three, and then five. Then on Sunday, quietly improvise the Postlude for three minutes over the same notes.

The organist wishing to learn this rare art needs to have an ultimate model in basic matters. I suggest that he play daily a movement from one of Bach's Trio Sonatas.

The following are some of the weaknesses that I have heard in various churches: monotony of registers and cadences; thinking too much on top; uninteresting melodic contours; lack of expansion of motif (that is, poor invention); chromaticism; sickly use of diminished-seventh chord; modulating when not necessary. Surely, in 1952 and after, we can jump over the fence without getting a poor mark from teacher! But if one thinks he should modulate, he should do it *contrapuntally* most of the time.

The fundamental thought to keep tight hold of is that a thought-out plan must be with the player long enough to be a felt-out plan. Also, we should remember that Franck and Beethoven always wrestled with their themes and did not expect to be shot with heavenly fire all at once!

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A Letter

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8th. October, 1952

TO THE EDITOR, *Organ Institute Quarterly*
DEAR SIR,

A Mr. Vente of Holland wrote an article, which appeared in your last issue, which laid down the law in a very definite manner, indicating the only principles upon which (in his opinion, but not stated as such) an artistic organ could be designed and constructed.

Such "ad hoc" statements must be accepted with reserve. I can appreciate that an individual brought up amongst slider-soundboards, very low pressures, tracker action, and other points redolent of practice that is a reversion to that of the early 19th. century and earlier, (Back to Methuselah!) has only one ideal type of instrument in mind, especially if he is not acquainted with the great works of, for example, Cavaille-Coll, in France, Willis in England, and Donald Harrison in America.

I was under the impression that the use of the slider-chest had been discarded many years ago by all progressive organ builders — my own firm has not used such for thirty years and we would not think of a return to such use. A properly designed and constructed sliderless chest on the pitman system is so greatly superior in every way that there is simply no comparison.

Before my firm dropped the slider-chest, devices in its construction had been embodied enabling such chests to resist — as far as possible — climatic changes — also the reed stops were always partitioned off to receive an individual wind supply to each note — but the whole principle of the slider-chest is undesirable, one pallet to supply from one stop up to twelve or more with the inevitable robbings that take place which are the tuner's bug-bear. But there are some who do not seem to be troubled by robbings and out-of-tuneness, so evident in so many instruments on the Continent of Europe.

Mr. Vente is probably not aware that the very early 15th. century organs in Germany did not have slider chests but a pallet to every pipe.

Tracker action again: is it necessary at this stage of development to reconsider its use? I do not think so—the drawbacks are only too obvious. A well balanced tracker-action can be produced, but added weight with the use of couplers is a fact that cannot be gainsaid.

The use your contributor has in mind is that of manuals played individually and contrasted — inter-manual couplers provided but seldom used and the old design is accepted by those without practice in the modern use and idiom. I ask your readers how they would like to revert to tracker actions and no couplers beyond inter-manual and manual to pedal.

Again the use of extremely light wind pressures gives less latitude to the artistic voicer — the voicing treatment of the old type which Mr. Vente favours, for he probably has no acquaintance with any other, provides a very wide bore to the tip of the pipe and constriction at the flue — this results in tonal inequality as between pipes of the same stop and this is actually claimed as artistic and beneficial!

Reeds on very light pressures are flabby and raucous, this, again, is claimed as a virtue.

Distinguished English organists and musicians have likened the tonal effect of "organs in the ancient style" to that of a hurdy-gurdy. I do not go as far as that but do consider that the crudeness and blatancy, especially noticeable in the upper work, also the pronounced "chiff" of un-nicked or under-nicked pipes is not acceptable to the cultured ear.

By all means have an unenclosed Positif section on a instrument large enough to carry it — but do not let us permit the imposition of an old and

threadbare tradition upon a musical civilization that has developed to a much higher level.

I pass over much misstatement that appears in the article in question due, no doubt, to an incorrect use of English combined with non-understanding of technical matters.

Yours sincerely,

HENRY WILLIS

This letter is published in full not only because of the eminence of its author, but because it and the article upon which it comments each represent widely held and sharply divergent views with respect to the course that future development of the organ should follow. The ORGAN INSTITUTE QUARTERLY would like to present all sides of this question.

Signed articles appearing in the QUARTERLY do not necessarily represent the opinions of the editor and editorial board. We do not want to impoverish the musical journalistic fare of our readers by offering only material that is in complete agreement with our own ideas. It is our purpose to fill the magazine with informative articles on many subjects, but it is inevitable that authors' opinions will appear together with facts. And it is valuable to all of us to know the opinions of outstanding authorities such as Dr. Vente and Mr. Willis.

Speaking of the romantic period in "My View of Organ Building Today" Dr. Vente said "The most terrible excesses were encountered in the Anglo-Saxon countries, where special high wind pressure was frequently applied to reeds." If we think of this Anglo-Saxon country, the United States, where pressures of ten, twenty, and even as high as one hundred inches are not unknown, the statement is not without some justification. Perhaps English consciences are clearer, and it is certain that the type of tone which has long been associated with "Willis reeds" is genuinely admired on both sides of the Atlantic.

Our profession is undoubtedly entering into a new phase of development that will command the serious attention of all. Both here and abroad a constantly increasing number of organists and builders are now advocating a return to the slider and pallet wind chest. They feel that certain desirable speech, tonal and blending characteristics can only be obtained from pipes that are winded by such chests. Proponents of the present electropneumatic chests cite the now almost forgotten but once familiar deficiencies of the old tracker organs. Certain builders are attempting to develop a superior type of mechanical action employing a new design and modern materials. Several companies are now producing instruments of this kind and it is noteworthy that they offer economy, as a practical advantage, in addition to the musical features that are considered desirable.

Every organist will want to be informed of these striking developments. It is our responsibility to make the ultimate decision in the matter. No scientific principle, no engineering efficiency or mechanical excellence should be permitted to displace *musical utility* as the dominant criterion by which this development is judged. Let us try to discover the *artistic* truth.

Conflicting Musical Purposes–I

Organ music requires constant deference to one or the other of two opposite principles. Each is equally valid for the achievement of specific results but we cannot, in our playing, apply them both simultaneously. A clear understanding of the exact nature and effect of each should enable us to choose wisely between them.

The first of these principles is the ideal of clarity, distinctness. In deference to it we try to have organ pipes placed most favorably, so that the sound may go directly from its source to the listener. We also insist on brightly colored and transparent tone, so that all voices may be heard in contrapuntal movement, and we "thin out" our registration, eliminating thick, dark-toned stops. To the same end we play at such tempi and with such phrasing that every melodic figure, every progression, and even the most minute details of the score will be plainly discernible to the listener, and achieve its fullest effect.

On the other hand, we sometimes deliberately seek the opposite result. In photography the sharpest picture is not always the best and most interesting picture. By means of special lighting, focusing and printing, a photographer can soften the lines of his subject, so that some details are suggested rather than clearly outlined. This half light slightly obscured quality adds interest to the picture and makes portraits more flattering. Somewhat the same effect is given to organ music by reverberation in the church or auditorium, when it is sufficiently prominent. We have other ways of developing this indistinctness. We make the music distant by placing the pipes in recessed chambers and we give it an illusory quality by the operation of expression shutters. And we obscure the lines of the music with celestes and tremolos.

Deference to the principle of indistinctness is an effort to ornament the music with dramatic "effects" which will themselves appeal directly to the emotions, rather than focusing attention on the notes, which results from deference to the ideal of distinctness. We obviously cannot apply both principles and achieve both results at the same time! Careful consideration leads many organists to the conclusion that much organ music is hindered rather than helped by the second principle, and that its devices should be reserved for certain styles of composition. Romantic music is generally charged with feeling that is implied or vaguely suggested, and when it is predominantly homophonic these implications may be artfully emphasized by the application of the "indistinct" principle. In polyphonic music, or any passage in which the effect is dependent upon vigorous melodic or contrapuntal movement, distinctness is essential.

The choices that we make, in applying these conflicting principles, are a measure of our musicianship and artistic maturity.

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Conflicting Musical Purposes–II

Organists proverbially scorn singers because singers so often seem to concentrate their attention on tone production to the detriment of the music. We feel righteous indignation at their scooping and swooping and rhythmic inexactitude. In many instances they do these things because good vocal habits are not sufficiently well established to be practiced automatically, and require constant attention. That is why better musical results can sometimes be obtained from choruses of untrained singers who lose themselves in the music without reference to the physical conditions which trained or partly trained singers believe to be essential to good singing.

Even the most accomplished singers sometimes abuse the music for reasons of vocal expediency. It is hardly necessary to protest against the Italian tenor style of singing (by no means limited to tenors) in which every tone is breaking with emotion and every note drips heart-rending tragedy. The wide or otherwise too prominent vibrato is anathema to all musicians and is highly inappropriate for choral music. Moreover, there is something degrading in its suggestion that human beings are of a jelly-like consistency.

However much the singers may need the musical discipline that we impose on them, it is true that the requirements of the music, as set by the composer *and* the choirmaster, are sometimes inimicable to good singing. In the soprano and tenor parts of Beethoven's Choral Symphony, and in the tenor parts of many of the Bach Cantatas and Passions, it is almost impossible to maintain the best tone quality throughout because of their uncomfortably high tessitura. If they are rehearsed over and over, considerable vocal strain is inevitable. Any long-continued practicing of passages with high notes will have the same effect.

In a general way, good singing depends upon freedom from tension. Difficult melodic intervals, such as a seventh or an augmented fourth, which are easy to play on an instrument but hard to "find" with the voice, can induce tension. Any instrumental musician will want the singers under his direction to sing their parts clearly without either scooping the attacks or gliding (portamento) between the notes, and will insist that all singers in a part change notes precisely together. This becomes especially important whenever several rapid notes are sung to the same syllable. The effort to control their voices so exactly, however, is likely to cause some singers to "tighten."

Strong accents on some syllables and notes, however desirable musically, can interfere with production in inexperienced singers. They are apt to think in terms of "spinning," and "floating," and "pouring," their tones, so that any sudden change or vigorous effort is fundamentally incompatible. Their best tones are dependent upon the maintenance of a certain feeling of relaxation which is almost certain to result in musical inexactness. The un-

trained singer who is thinking about "freeing" his tones so as to produce the maximum of vocal resonance may even be upset by the simple requirement of singing in strict time.

Some singers have such firmly established bad singing habits that their presence in a choir is a handicap to the group. They should be diplomatically excluded in fairness to the other singers, the choirmaster, and the congregation.

It is our responsibility to effect a practical reconciliation of these two sets of purposes which sometimes conflict with each other. We must develop in our singers an understanding of the requirements of a *musical* rather than a purely *vocal* style, and at the same time warn them against the danger of sacrificing good tone for good music. In planning and conducting rehearsals, we must defer to the limitations of the voice and make no unreasonable requirements of it. We should recognize all types of vocal difficulties and make allowances for them in directing, giving warnings when necessary. Tension of any kind is the enemy of good singing. Too often singers begin a rehearsal with good resonance and in-tune singing, only to have the tone gradually vitiated by bad singing during the evening so that they end the rehearsal with croaky, husky voices. Sometimes this is the result of psychological tension induced by the frustrating repetition of the same details. The surest sign of bad production is flatting, and choirs often begin to sing badly because of their straining to meet the choirmaster's exacting requirements.

The perfectly produced voice improves itself in the act of singing. The choirmaster should do nothing to interfere with this happy result.

The ideal singer would combine superior vocal skill and control with musicianship and understanding so that he could easily meet all of our musical requirements. The ideal choral conductor would incorporate in his practice and performance the best possible use of the natural characteristics of the human voice and avoid taxing it beyond its normal limits, besides, of course, deferring to all the artistic principles common to instrumental as well as vocal music.

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Registration

Ernest White

If asked what produces the color in tone, most players would give the correct answer: the number and prominence or absence of the upper partials produced with the original pitch. How many organists apply that to their registration? It takes both time and courage to break the habit of thinking outward in easy steps from the unison eight foot pitch adding each pitch progressively for strength. Registrations based on that mode of thought are likely to be as similar as those produced by a 'crescendo' pedal. Stops are added in the same order and the over-all effect is but loud and soft, bright and dull. The same stop sequence is applied to music no matter what the texture may be.

The essential color in any combination is determined by the outside pitches. This essential color may then be modified in any way that is desired. Let us recall the simple designation of pitch levels used in other articles. The sub octave or 16′ pitch gives a grave and dignified effect. The unison pitch is but to localize the others. The four foot pitch produces a singing character in proportion to its strength and harmonic color. The twelfth lets the sunshine into the combination and the two foot outlines the essential pitch in a brilliant manner. The Tierce is a special and very strong color to be used with care. Further up the essential character of the pitches repeats on the four foot level.

Thus for clarity of line a stopped eight foot flute with a two foot stop is ideal; for a colorful line, eight foot and twelfth. The eight foot with the octave twelfth (larigot) will produce a more singing character than eight foot and twelfth, because the larigot is a harmonic of the four foot line. The eight foot and one foot in the same way will produce a piquant color. These extreme pitches each provide a different effect depending upon the note of the basic chord (unison or quint) and the distance represented from the basic pitch. In turn these extreme positions may be modified by singing, brilliant or colorful pitches. The more pitches used, the more ordinary the tone becomes, and its strength increases.

In each pitch level the quality of the tone added will materially change the result. Stopped pipes produce the colorful harmonics. Open pipes produce all harmonics, so the tone is more assertive and less blending. Reed pitches are the most efficient harmonic generators—and cause the greatest change. An eight foot stopped flute and a four foot oboe will in some cases produce a most satisfactory full tone.

In an organ with two swell boxes it is often satisfactory to have the eight foot tone in one box and the four foot in the other so that the balance in the essential combination may be shifted to correspond with the changes in the feeling of the music without shifting the color.

The organ in the Festival Church of St. John, Waterloo. Incorporating some of the pipe work from the original instrument built in 1814. N. P. Mander, Ltd., of London, a firm that specializes in restoring old organs, rebuilt it in 1951.

Simple texture, gentle movement, singing parts
basis of 8′ and 4′ tone
Simple texture, bright movement, vigorous lines
basis of 8′ and 2′ tone
Complex texture, moving parts
basis of 8′ flues and mixture
Complex texture, many voices or spread chords
basis of 16′, 8′ flues and mixture

Radical differences in character between hands are often best shown by reeds and mixtures, as in vigorous movements in French Symphonies.

Chords lying high in keyboard generally require 16′ tone.

Polyphony in more than five parts generally takes 16′ tone.

Simple hymn tune announced:	Manuals 8′ and 4′
	Pedals 16′, 8′ and 4′
for singing:	add $2\frac{2}{3}$′ and 2′
	The congregation adds 8′ and 4′
Vigorous hymn tune:	Manuals 8′, 4′ and mixture
	Pedal: Flue 16′, 4′
	Reed 16′, 8′
Majestic chorale:	Manuals Reed 16′, 4′
	Flues 8′, 4′ and mixture
	Pedal to match.

The reed may well be the Choir Clarinet coupled at just those pitches.

Use couplers only where necessary to gain pitches. The usual unison coupling adds little but weight and a dulling of the original color. On the other hand an octave coupling of appropriate stops greatly increases the effect. (With an octave coupling omit the unison coupler.)

In Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Music when there is an essential pedal part (one taking a thematic part, or a regular bass part) play the manual part on the principal keyboard. Contrasts are then played on Manual II. There is then usually no pedal part, or a rudimentary one. Changes are made at cadences—and if that is not possible play wholly on the principal manual. This includes fugue subjects and the exposition of the fugue where the pedal takes its voice in turn. In multiple movement fugues a contrast or secondary fugue may be played upon a secondary manual.

Chorale preludes: where the chorale is in the pedal, except in vigorous pieces the chorale line is generally played on the pedals at four foot pitch. The bass of the composition then is in the left hand part. Watch for the possibility of sixteen foot tone in the left hand part.

The essential pitch of the pedal in general pieces is eight foot. The sixteen foot pitch is a mere doubling. The pedal part should if possible be independent of the manual tone. If the organ used will not admit of this,

(Continued on page 32)

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Busman's Holiday

A pleasant surprise, in the form of an invitation to attend a service and criticize the music, has encouraged this practitioner not only to continue his pilgrimages but also to believe that his fellow organists are not *all* convinced that their own individual habits and idiosyncracies are so superior that they are above any criticism. After about six weeks in a new position, a young organist learned from his minister that the singing of the choir and his playing of the preludes and postludes were giving genuine satisfaction, but that he was playing the hymns too fast for the congregation.

I had recently attended a church service elsewhere on a special occasion that had brought out an unusually large congregation, and the organist had been unable to compel them to sing with him at his frivolous tempi. He tried to make the stately old tunes of "O God, Our Help in Ages Past" and "Now Thank We All Our God" sound like children's songs at a Sunday School picnic, depriving them of all solemnity. He played full organ, staccato throughout. Some of the congregation nearest to him would begin each verse with him, and the congregation was frequently divided, seldom with the organist. By the end of each verse, the great volume and good judgment of the congregation would prevail; but our hero would not admit defeat and attempted to launch each new verse at his rapid pace. The choir, consisting of a quartet of soloists, loyally maintained a constant racket that was more or less in agreement with the organ accompaniment; but they were not of much help as each of them seemed to be afflicted with cerebral palsy, or most certainly palsy of the vocal chords. They warbled up and down through the interval of at least a minor third all the time, whether singing high or low. The general rise and fall of their voices corresponded with the outline of the tune, but they could never land on one single note; and at no time was it possible to tell just what notes they were supposed to be singing. The off-beat, out-of-step, stumbling, pushing and pulling of this chaotic performance, topped off by the palsied shrieks and bleatings of the choir, provided one of the most painful experiences of my entire musical life.

It was a great relief and satisfaction, therefore, to find that he who was sufficiently open-minded and objective to invite criticism was in command of a splendid musical service that needed little criticism. The singing of the choir was perfectly disciplined, and all musical parts of the service were characterized by order and dignity. When I visited, the hymns had already been slowed down but still did seem a little hurried. Their tempi would have been good for the seven hundred youths of Phillips Academy whose pulses really quicken to lively music, but this congregation was made up mostly of middle-aged and elderly people, spread out over a wide area. It would have been impossible to get them to do anything quickly. Instead of a single group united in attitude and feeling, they seemed to be a collection of individuals of whom each one exhibited *great* personal dignity. Any suggestion of hurrying would be definitely out of place!

It seemed to me that this organist created the effect of haste in his playing even though the tempi were not really fast. For one thing, two notes to a beat, whenever they occurred, were played a little too quickly; the subdivided beats were thus shorter than those with single notes. This is quite a common failing, to play rapid notes too quickly. The occasional subdivision of the beat into two notes, either in a melody or in a lower voice, can produce an effect of grandeur when executed in deliberate, strict time. That is the well known characteristic of second species counterpoint, with two notes to a beat. Three notes to a beat sounds lively and even frivolous, but two seem to impart a special dignity to the rhythm; not, however, when they are hurried. Play them deliberately, making sure that the two halves of the beat are exactly equal.

The tune in which this uncomfortable hurrying was most noticeable was "St. Thomas," for the words "O bless the Lord, my soul." Its melodic climax comes with the high notes in the last line which must be preceded by a breath. As though resenting any suggestion of holding back at the logical breathing point after the long third line, the organist rushed ahead somewhat rudely. He was controlling the congregation, as an organist should, but in a manner that was inconsiderate of their reasonable requirements.

In the choir anthems, which were well sung and played, there was a noticeable reluctance to slow down at cadences, and the organ accompaniment moved on to the final chord with unrelenting determination. The effort to avoid sentimentality was laudable, but music should have moments of repose as well as motion and tension, and very often it should come to rest gradually instead of suddenly, especially at final cadences. Too vigorous a movement can be just as inappropriate as lifeless and dull performance.

That visit was thoroughly enjoyable. Recent weeks, however, have been discouraging in that each succeeding Sunday has brought a series of disillusionments. Apparently many organists have little regard for the importance of hymn playing, as I rarely hear them played rhythmically and steadily at a well chosen tempo. Some master musicians use large and overbearing masses of organ tone to browbeat their congregations into following them as they speed up and slow down in accordance with some unaccountable whimsy of their own. May the good Lord spare us (and Himself if possible) from having to listen to organists who "interpret" hymns! The circulatory and respiratory systems provide every human being with a good sense of rhythm which is common to all of us. It is necessary for the control of many voluntary movements such as walking, chewing, speaking, et cetera. It may not be good enough to enable everybody to play a four-part hymn on an organ properly, but it is certainly good enough for anyone to sing simple melodies in strict time and enjoy doing it. It is at very least vaguely irritating to everyone for the organist to distort familiar music with rhythmic aberrations, and often it is quite consciously annoying.

Even more depressing than the bad rhythm with which so many organists abuse music and congregations is the unpleasant tone quality with

which they seem obliged to assail the ears of the people. In one church after another, I have heard the services played through with only the very limited variety of color afforded by 8′ stops. In fact, the entire color range of some of the organs most heavily laden with diapasons was simply: FOG HORN *mp*, FOG HORN *mf*, FOG HORN *f*, and FOG HORN *ff*. No organist can completely overcome the handicap of a poorly designed and badly voiced organ. Sometimes, however, it is possible to coax real organ-like sounds from them by resorting to unusual expedients. For example, coupling the Swell and Choir to the Great only at 4′ pitch will lighten the ensemble. Another useful device is to use one of the manual doubles as a foundation for a full combination, playing everything an octave higher so that the 16′ stop becomes 8′, the 8′ stops become 4′, and the 4′ stops become 2′. Then the light manual doubles can be coupled to the pedal at 8′ and substituted for the lumpy, windy Pedal Diapasons and Bourdons that are all too common. By such devious means a judicious selection of stops can sometimes be discovered. It should be recognized, however, that some instruments are not subject to improvement by this or any other devices, and attempts to lighten them with super couplers only make them sound more ugly.

The following selection of stops from the large organ in the Andover Chapel is an example of the unexpected results of such experimentation. It looks peculiar on paper, but sounds well when used for hymns or any massive music. Although its effect could probably not be reproduced on any other organ in exactly the same way, it seems worthy of careful study because of the principles which it exemplifies and which might be successfully employed elsewhere.

PEDAL
- 32′ Soubasse
- 16′ Violon
- 16′ Dulciana
- 16′ Lieblich Gedeckt
- 10⅔′ Quint
- 8′ Cello
- 8′ Dulciana
- 8′ Gedeckt
- 6⅖′ Tierce
- 5⅓′ Quint
- 4′ Dulciana
- 4′ Klein Gedeckt

CHOIR
- 16′ Quintadena
- 8′ Quintadena
- VIII Cornet (8′, 4′, 2⅔′, 2′, 1⅗′, 1⅓′, 1⅐′, 1′)

SWELL
- 8′ Salicional
- 4′ Geigen
- V Cornet
- IV Mixture

SOLO
- 16′ Contra Gamba
- 8′ Gamba
- 4′ Fugara
- VII Mixture

GREAT
- 8′ Bourdon
- 8′ Gemshorn
- 4′ Principal
- V Cornet
- IV Fourniture

COUPLERS
- Swell to Pedal 8′
- Solo to Pedal 8′, 4′
- Swell to Great 8′, 4′
- Solo to Great 8′, 4′
- Choir to Great 8′
- Great to Great 4′

None of the manual stops are unified. The off-unison mutations in the Pedal are naturally tuned; they make the 32′ Soubasse sound like a string or light reed. Each of the Cornets includes as its lowest rank a light 8′ Gedeckt; the other mixtures include an 8′ rank in the upper octaves.

The 16′ and 32′ stops give this combination depth and gravity, while at the same time it is ablaze with brilliance. Every chord played upon it extends through the entire gamut of audible pitch, and all ranges of frequency are approximately in balance, being represented by tones of nearly equal

strength. This all-pervasive quality is thrilling. A dignified and vigorous hymn tune played on this combination can stir up the maximum adolescent vocal power, which is remarkable considering the general apathy and even antagonism toward compulsory chapel services.

Although this combination is a fairly successful mezzo forte imitation of the "organo pleno" sound which is the ideal full combination in classical and modern organs, this exact combination would be inexpedient if not impossible on such organs. It is not without good reason that super couplers are omitted from "classic style" organs, whether old or new. In them the mixtures and mutations are full-voiced and scaled so as to balance with principals and other large foundation stops. In the Andover organ, the mixtures are small-scale, about like salicionals, and voiced piano, so that all of them together with super couplers are just in balance with the light 8′ foundations shown. If all the manual 8′ diapasons (seven of them) and 8′ flutes (six in all) are drawn, the entire chorus of mixtures with super couplers becomes almost inaudible and sounds like an unpleasant scratchiness accompanying an otherwise smooth, round, and tremendous tone.

Further, if the large-scale Pedal 32′, 16′, 8′, and 4′ Diapasons, together with the Pedal 32′ Contra Trombone and 16′ Trombone are added, all of the rest of the organ becomes inaudible at the console.

As a matter of fact, in all large organs, just a few stops seem to predominate, and they are apt to sound confused and less loud than smaller organs that are just large enough to fill their auditoria with tones occupying all the pitches in the harmonic series. Beyond a certain size, the law of diminishing returns becomes effective, and each added stop produces little or no increase in volume. Sound waves originating in different parts of the organ cancel each other out by interference, leaving only an unpleasant disturbance in the air.

In seven years of controlling the hundred-stop giant (its blowers are rated at 22½ horsepower!), we at Andover learned to avoid all of its peculiarities and defects and discovered innumerable effective combinations suitable for the performance of many different kinds of music. We feel the greatest respect for its builders, not only on account of the beautiful voicing throughout the instrument, but because of its mechanical excellence; it is in splendid condition after twenty-five years of daily practicing. Even in the very best of instruments, however, a judicious selection of stops is likely to sound better than all together, even for *fff*. We found that from forty-five to fifty was the highest number of stops that could be combined with good effect in this case. Smaller organs in smaller buildings are likely to sound best with many fewer than this, and there is usually a number of stops that *must* be omitted from the full organ if a bright, well balanced ensemble is desired.

Effective registration, carefully selected and constantly maintained tempi, rhythmic playing, and phrasing which is natural to the human voice, are all essentials of good hymn playing. Perfection in these matters is not easily attained but must be diligently sought and cultivated.

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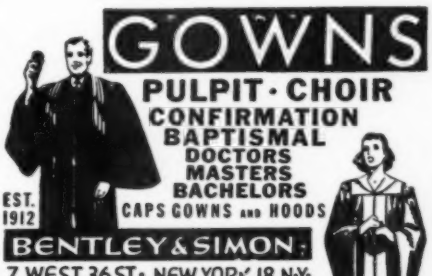

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• The Winter issue, which will be published in January, will contain several new and unusual features in addition to the usual number of interesting articles. They will be as follows:

• A number of pages devoted to a professional directory in which prominent members of the profession from all over the United States will be represented by professional cards (1/16 page). There will also be pictures and advertisements of well known concert artists. It is planned to make this directory a regular feature of our Winter issue each year.

• A complete announcement of Summer Session plans, together with the 1953 repertoire list.

• A new department which will appear regularly hereafter. Rudolph Elie, Music Editor of the *Boston Herald*, and other members of our Editorial Board, will review organ recordings for our readers.

• A series of articles dealing with subjects of interest and importance to choirmasters and choral conductors will begin.

• Robert Noehren, University Organist at the University of Michigan, has been awarded a grant from the Graduate School of the University of Michigan to make a practical study in the

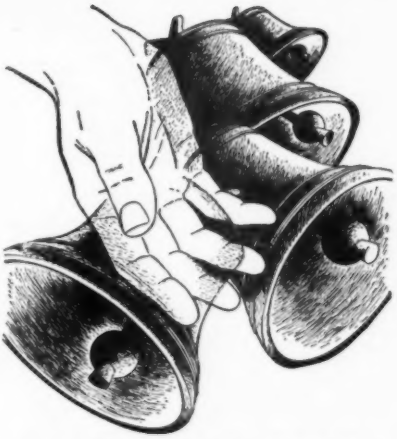
BRIEFS ★ ★ ★

voicing of organ pipes. He will present his findings to readers of the QUARTERLY in a series of articles to begin soon.

• We welcome T. Carl Whitmer to the pages of the ORGAN INSTITUTE QUARTERLY. His "Invitation to Improvisation" indicates that his book on the same subject offers profitable reading.

• Richard Hudson, whose article in this issue presents substantial thought on the interrelationship of tone and music, received a degree from Syracuse University in June, and is now in Holland to study organs and organ music. He has already made the acquaintance there of Dr. M. A. Vente, who contributed to our Summer issue.

• The Organ Institute Summer Session at the University of Texas was a stimulating and pleasant experience for all who participated in it, both faculty and students, due in no small measure to the cordial cooperation of Dean Doty of the College of Fine Arts and members of his staff. The Department of Music faculty of performing artists, practicing composers, and distinguished musicologists, together with unexcelled facilities, place the University of Texas in the musical foreground among American universities.



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INSTITUTE BRIEFS—*Cont.*

● Forthcoming issues will also include articles by Archibald Davison, Rowland Dunham, Ralph Kirkpatrick, Wilfrid Pelletier and Leopold Stokowski.

REGISTRATION—*Cont.*

assign the choir organ to the pedal by coupling. The clarinet at 8 or 4 foot pitch redeems many an inadequate pedal division.

In adding reeds:

The sixteen or four foot should be added first depending on the choice of adding gravity or brilliance first. Then, and then only the eight foot reed if it still is necessary to push the unison line. This consideration is for the pedal organ also.

Foundation tone The eight foot pitch line and all the normal harmonics of that line. 8′, 4′, 2⅔′, 2′. Pedal 16′, 8′ and 4′.

Flue tone All pitches in foundation tone with mixtures 16′, 8′ level if the music requires it. Pedal same texture.

Organo pleno All pitches of flues and mixtures (no reeds) Pedal: all pitches including reeds. If the reeds produce too much weight, remove flue tone to balance.

Wherever possible use one stop to one pitch.

4 Morning World-Herald,
Omaha, Mon., Jan. 14, 1952.

Organist Plays for Organists, Yet Pleases Lay Audience

By Martin W. Bush

The organist, Arthur Howes, is well known in the East. Here he was unknown save to a few church musicians. But at Kountze Memorial Lutheran Church Sunday afternoon he quickly and surely proved himself a player of enviable attributes.

Organists, in general, are finicky individuals. They are choosy and opinionated about organ design and organ specifications. They are, moreover, finicky about the manner in which their colleagues play.

Their shop talk goes into matters of colorful or colorless registration, rhythmic drive, clarity and neatness of digital and pedal accomplishment, observance of styles and traditions of various epochs. Occasionally they consider the transmission, by the player, of beauty in music.

Had any of the more particular kept score cards on Mr. Howes's program they would have had to use super grades on every count; even to application of that loosely used term, real artist.

His list was made of five choices—30 minutes—from Bach, two numbers by Karg-Elert, a "Psalm Prelude" by Howells, and Vierne's "Westminster Carillon."

Irreproachable in quality, it was beautifully designed for an audience of professional organists. Yet despite its severity or austerity a large audience listened attentively and its admiration of the player was never in doubt, even in its observance of the church convention of no applause.

Mr. Howes's appearance was sponsored by the Kountze Memorial Choir.

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A nonprofit corporation organized to promote interest in organs and organ music and to disseminate the most advanced contemporary thought and practice in the organ profession.

Interested persons may participate in its program by becoming Associates of the Organ Institute. See pages 4 and 18 of this issue.

The 1953 Summer Sessions will be announced in this space in January.

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